

Greenberg's Prose and Poetry about World War I

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Abstract: In her article "Greenberg's Prose and Poetry about World War I" Chanita Goodblatt analyses the literary response of Uri Zvi Greenberg to the war. His volume of poetry *Krieg oyf der Erd* — largely untranslated to English — can be read as part of a multicultural literary response to World War I, particularly in juxtaposition with the poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Goodblatt posits that a study of shared esthetic strategies and literary traditions underlines the way in which Greenberg created an "alienated wanderer" who witnesses and stands helpless in the face of the violence and destruction of battle, as well as that inflicted upon the civilian population.

Chanita GOODBLATT

Greenberg's Prose and Poetry about World War I

The renowned Israeli Hebrew poet Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896-1981) began his long and distinguished career in Yiddish, publishing descriptions in prose and poetry of his experiences as a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army. The final, most fully edited version is his 1923 volume *קריג אויף דער ערד* *Krieg oyf der Erd* (War on Earth), which remains for the most part untranslated to English (with the exception of a single passage; see Abramson; Miron, "Uri Zvi Grinberg's"). In the introduction to his volume Greenberg writes that "Written during the terrible years 1915-1918 and published in the year 1919 in Lemberg, under the title In the Rush of Time. I have made some changes in the current edition. The horror of remembering seeps until now into the 'spine.' Warsaw, the end of 1922" (3; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine).

Greenberg focuses on the grotesquely metonymic image of the spine to concretize a strong emotional response. This leads to several questions. What are the esthetic strategies employed by Greenberg in *Krieg oyf der Erd* when he depicts the various experiences of war: wandering, battles, and finally journeys through Serbian and Bosnian lands. In other words, what figures and tropes (rhetorical, metonymic, metaphoric) does Greenberg employ to portray the war in its various aspects? And how is the relationship between these figures and tropes, and Greenberg's use of various literary traditions expressed? One distinctive answer situates Greenberg's volume within the wider discussion of the literary response to World War I. For example, Dan Miron notes the resemblance between Greenberg's prose and "the poetry of astonishment and emotional disintegration" characteristic of the English war poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon ("המשורר במלחמה" 22). Thus Greenberg's response can be read as part of a multicultural literary response to World War I characterized by "the alienated wanderer ... images of fragmentation and loss ... [and] narrative discontinuity" (Cole 471), as well as by a use and subversion of various literary traditions including the pastoral and the grotesque.

In "A Terre" Owen envisions a wounded officer as the poetic speaker addressing the silent poet: "My glorious ribbons? — Ripped from my own back / In scarlet shreds. (That's for your poetry book)" (202). These lines set out the complex relationship between the speaker and the poet as witness, as well as between the reality of war and the manner in which this reality is conveyed. Invoking his authority as an officer and hero, the speaker focuses on the scarred male body to challenge the role of poetry as a personal expression or alternately as a glorification of war. His action of ripping off the ribbons — at once a metonymic image of physical wounds and a metaphoric image of pain and suffering — emphasizes not only the disintegration of the body but also the disintegration of national identity. What is more, the awareness of the male body, a central aspect of wartime experience in consequence of grueling military training, the crowded life in the trenches, and the battles (see, e.g., Kerr), reveals Owen's use of the grotesque. The classic definitions of this concept emphasize a tension-filled relationship between two elements, for the grotesque is "an irreconcilable clash between opposites, both in the piece and in the reaction" (Thomson 27) and "the sensation that objects that must be separate have been joined" (Harpham 11). In Owen's poem the semantic and visual clash is an apt echo of war, comprising an inconceivable, violent and revolting conflict.

Subsequently the officer's words become even harsher as he criticizes the pastoral tradition in English poetry: "One Spring! Is one too good to spare, too long? / Spring wind would work its own way to my lung, / And grow me legs as quick as lilac-shoots ... // Certainly flowers have the easiest time on earth. / 'I shall be one with nature, herb and stone,' / Shelley would tell me. Shelley would be stunned: / The dullest Tommy hugs that fancy now. / 'Pushing up daisies' is their creed you know" (Owen 202-03). With great pathos the speaker imagines a pastoral world in which, with the coming of spring, he participates physically in the renewal of nature. His use of this tradition underlines the pastoral as "the discourse of retreat ... [that] is able to explore the present, or imagine an alternative future" (Gifford 46). But the grotesque, metonymic picture (his legs, missing from his lower body, will grow as lilac-shoots) that comprises the foundation of the physical — and metaphorically, spiritual — renewal, ultimately emphasizes his failure in realizing such a world. What is more, it is the conversation between two lovers of English poetry (the officer and the poet) that allows Owen to intensify his attack on the pastoral. For the officer paraphrases from the pastoral poem "Adonais: An Elegy on the

Death of John Keats," written by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley which contains the line "He is made one with Nature" (21; regarding Owen's use of Shelley's poetry, see Tomlinson). The tension in the officer's words between poetic and military discourse results in a sense of the grotesque that is at once linguistic and visual, which culminates in physical decay replacing a spiritual unification with abstract "Nature." In the context of Owen's poem, Shelley's sublime statement is echoed in the soldier's simple yet picturesque language. The grotesque aspects of both language and image define the entire poem as a comment on the art of poetry during wartime — an art created by a clash that is physical, realistic, and literary.

Images of "astonishment and emotional disintegration" are at the center of Owen's poem, as he uses the grotesque to undermine the pastoral. These aspects are also found in the opening prose section of *Krieg oyf der Erd* where Greenberg creates disjointed diary entries portraying "an alienated wanderer" who experiences both the process of recruitment into the army and the autumn 1915 battles. Greenberg details a terrifying vision: "And if there were no barrier, the eyes could see beyond the fog at the dead of night. A sea is spread out. Distant and huge. Its raging waters are raging blood. And on the beach you can hear: Ha. So wild: hhha. A red fire burns. In the fire skeletons dance: fire within fire in a ringing-dance. A demon laughs, or perhaps an evil idol, ha. And another figure, a body in black, with two horns, it points with a long, thin arm of fire and laughs —" (30). This portrayal of the *danse macabre* is an outstanding example of the grotesque as "an attempt to arouse and subdue the demonic aspects of the world" (Kayser 188). Its powerful impact, created by the integration of sight and sound, is highlighted by a comparison with a vision of ghosts in Sassoon's poem "Prelude: The Troops": "O my brave brown companions, when your souls / Flock silently away, and the eyeless dead / Shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge, / Death will stand grieving in that field of war / Since your unvanquished hardihood is spent" (129).

As Mark Dollar comments, Sassoon "conceives of these ghosts as scarred, eyeless figures deformed by the hell of battle; they are supernatural figures of the macabre whom he pities for the loss of their youth" (235). In these lines, the speaker addresses apostrophically his dead friends and marches them slowly to the physical and metaphorical realm of death. The aspects of sacrifice and victimization are particularly evident in the metaphorical connection created between the soldiers (in brown uniforms) and the animals (in the word "flock"), thereby shaming the "wild beast of battle." This connection also expresses the grotesque; for the combination of the abstract souls of the dead and the actual mutilation of their bodies emphasizes the physical, frightening ugliness of the phrase "the eyeless dead." Despite this, however, the speaker finds comfort in the salutatory address by the figure of "Death" to the soldiers' bravery. This image — with its metaphorical abstractness (the personification of death) — softens the sharpness of the grotesque image. In this way Sassoon offers a control of the demonic world, as well as a feeling akin to respect in the face of death.

Sassoon presents his speaker as a witness who is not one of "the eyeless dead," but a visionary who perceives the consequences of war. Similarly, Greenberg presents his speaker as a figure who can see "beyond the fog." In contrast, however, the speaker in Greenberg's text does not address his fellow soldiers, but watches in solitude, disconnected emotionally from the physical act of sight and imposing metonymically the creation of the horrific vision onto his eyes. Furthermore, in contrast to Sassoon's speaker, who finds a certain comfort in his friends' heroism, Greenberg's speaker not only feels disassociated from himself as a result of his dangerous situation, but emphasizes the physical presence of the grotesque that cannot be subdued by heroic glory. Filling the description with perceptual impressions — such as the metaphor "its raging waters are raging blood" or the unique phrase "ringing-dance" — creates a confused, horrifying experience. Greenberg's use of the *danse macabre* indicates that the speaker is in the throes of a hallucination, one that draws inspiration from deep cultural roots; this delusion combines aspects of art, ritual, and sexuality. What is more, in contrast to Sassoon's quiet death march, Greenberg's *danse macabre* arouses difficult physical and emotional responses such as revulsion and fear, which intensify with the appearance of the demonic figure in the last lines. The blurring of death through personification in Sassoon's poem is replaced in Greenberg's text by introducing the devil in its full, threatening physical presence.

In a subsequent chapter the speaker describes his perceptual experience as follows: "A jumble of fragments and ripped things. And I am in the middle. The middle is desolation, as though black nights with overcast skies and bright summer days have melded into one eternity. Chaos. Wandering uphill

and downhill by foot, into the black forest and outward on a winding path. And cars still trail behind. A machine whistling in the distance. White shacks race in rows on both sides. Trees race by, gardens and grassy knolls with cows and shepherds ... ah. Also running, here and there, gaping walls, piles of bricks and charred chimneys. And in all the bedlam stands [the soul] the figure small as a bird, and does not care, and does not know where it is ... Death is the only [thing] it can still comprehend. Death" (39). This confusion of senses, demonstrating the speaker's physical and existential situation as he stands in "desolation," is imparted through a catalog of images. This comprises a metonymic list of perceptual confusion, in which the objects appear randomly to the speaker himself as "a jumble of fragments and ripped things." At the same time they seem to be quickly passing by in a metonymic imitation of the soldier's movements (shacks race, trees race by). Yet within this perceptual confusion the pastoral images are replaced by those of destruction: while the first impressions are taken from the pastoral (gardens, grass, cows, shepherds), images of destruction begin to protrude (gaping walls, bricks, charred chimneys), which undermine the tranquility and herald (once again metonymically) what the speaker himself will presently experience. Finally, in the midst of the chaos stands a bird, a figure from the pastoral world — and a recurrent image of the human soul in Greenberg's work (Abramson 69) — who is forced to confront death.

This catalog of images also appears in Owen's poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth," in which he presents a list of sounds: "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle / Only the monstrous anger of the guns. / Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle / Can patter out their hasty orisons" (193). The comparison of the two catalogs, however, highlights the differences between them. Owen constructs a series of metaphors, which personify the various weapons through their metonymic reference to the soldiers wielding them. The grotesque aspect is revealed as "that must be separate" — mechanical, industrialized weapons and human beings — "have been joined" (Harpham 11). Thus the "monstrous anger" goes beyond human limits, while the "stuttering" and "patter" of the weapons fills the silence left by the "doomed youth." In contrast, Greenberg lists separate, isolated images which indicate a perceptual and emotional dissociation, and does not allow a transition from the metonymic aspect to an integrated metaphoric structure. This is a significant difference, evident also in a comparison between another description by Greenberg and Owen's opening line. For Greenberg's speaker had previously avoided interpretive consequences and notes dry facts: "Cattle cars. Yesterday, or the day before, it was horses and bulls, today it is us" (34). Greenberg's realistic statement stands in contrast to Owen's figurative image and reveals the gap between Greenberg's speaker—trapped in a factual, perceptual response — and Owen's speaker — whose strong emotions burst forth in the tropes of simile and metaphor.

In *Krieg oyf der Erd* Greenberg focuses on the autumn 1915 battles on the banks of the Sava River. As Miron suggests "The Sava experiences ... [were formed] from a core around which the poet's lyric personality was organized" ("המשורר במלחמה" 20). One scene in particular, which appears several times throughout the volume, left its mark on him. After the Austro-Hungarian army crossed the river, the soldiers were shot and became entangled in the barbed wire that lined the positions of the Serbian army. In a 1916 collection there is a photograph that depicts a soldier's death, as well as the destruction surrounding him (see Figure 1). The camera focuses on the soldier who has been arrested in the very midst of storming the fence: his left leg is bent forward and his right hand grasps the gun barrel. Yet the wound in his bare, drooping head along with the limpness of his upper body attest to his death, and invite thoughts about the bitter end of a soldier who follows his commanders' orders. These thoughts are intensified when we notice the bodies of the soldiers behind him, lying on the ground with scattered rifles and equipment. The barbed wire stretches into the horizon, directing the beholder's eye to a tree planted in the center of the field, and thereby drawing a clear visual line between the tree, the body and the helmet — each in turn presented as a metonymic figure of the pastoral, of the dead and of the lone soldier.

The juxtaposition of these images emphasizes the anti-pastoral nature of the photograph. What is more, the positioning of the dead soldier in the center of the frame emphasizes the body's two roles: "On the one hand, the corpse as abject marks the threshold between subject and object and threatens to contaminate or dissolve the subject ... But, on the other hand, the corpse marks the border which confirms the living person as alive, and can thus be a source of strength and affirmation to the subject" (Tate 69). The photograph arouses two opposing responses in the viewer simultaneously: repul-

sion from the corpse while fearing the inevitable death awaiting each individual; and the obliteration of identification with the corpse while affirming one's personal existence. The power of the photograph lies, therefore, in its sharp visual testimony to the war, along with the realization of various psychological and esthetic features.

Figure 1



Reynolds and Taylor n.p. Copyright does not apply.

The first exposure of Greenberg's speaker to war depicted in the above photograph is presented in Chapter 16: "The whine of water, shattering of forests, towns and villages burning. Gray uniforms ... long necks of cannons, rusted knives on rifles and rotting bodies on the barbed wire in front" (39). The first images in this catalog of perceptual impressions depict the destruction of the pastoral, while the subsequent are images of battle which juxtapose weapons and human beings—both through metaphor (the personification of cannons) and through a metonymic display of the shared fate of rotting. Subsequently, in Chapter 20, the speaker describes "human bodies hanging on the wire with down-turned head and upturned legs" (41) and he then in Chapter 23 warns: "By the sharp barbed wire lie someone's limbs ... You did not know that barbed wire is meant for this, that if you reach forward you will be immediately sliced in three?" (42). With these words the speaker takes on the role of a witness, places the grotesque at the center of the picture, and explains concisely (if with a touch of annoyance) the dangers of barbed wire. The final transformation of the image appears in Chapter 25, in which the speaker's words take on a tone of revelation and symbolism: "I had a dream: I saw a bird fly, become entangled in the barbed wire strung across the field, and remain hanging with its head towards the ground" (43). In the move from a realistic description, the bird — again both a figure from the pastoral world and in image of the soul — replaces the dead, dismembered soldiers. The juxtaposition of the various chapters points therefore to the process of estheticization through which Greenberg creates a speaker who (amidst the raging battles) observes carefully what is happening around him to subsequently record in his notebook the struggle with fear and death in the face of destruction thereby taking upon himself to bear witness to the war and its consequences.

After this direct confrontation with battle Greenberg emphasizes in an intermediate section of the poetry the esthetic-emotional detachment from the previous section of prose. Yet the juxtaposition of the different sections of poetry and prose illuminate images and traditions which not only reappear throughout the volume, but are also apparent in Owen's unfinished poem, "Cramped in that Funnelled Hole": "Cramped in that funnelled hole, they watched the dawn / Open a jagged rim around; a yawn / Of death's jaws, which had all but swallowed them / Stuck in the bottom of his throat of phlegm. // They were in one of many mouths of Hell / Not seen of seers in visions; only felt / As teeth of traps; when bones and the dead are smelt / Under the mud where long ago they fell / Mixed with the sour

sharp odour of the shell" (109). These stanzas cannot be read without discussing the 1854 poem of Alfred Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." This is a consequence of Owen's direct challenge to the poetic tradition of praising heroism and war—of which "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is a central example—through his use (and transformation) of Tennyson's metaphors. Tennyson's poem describes the hopeless charge of the British cavalry against the Russian fortifications during the Crimean War, as he creates a speaker who watches the cavalry charge from afar—a witness for "all the world wonder'd" (1035). Tennyson evokes only vaguely the actual experience of battle, using "an imaginary generalization" (Breen 181), as in the description of cavalymen who rode "Into the jaws of Death / Into the mouth of Hell," while "Flash'd all their sabres bare / Flash'd as they turn'd in air" (1035). Jennifer Breen argues that Tennyson (or more specifically, the speaker as poet) "eulogizes the brave cavalymen who fought this battle, but he does not specify the suffering of the many wounded and dying men" (181). For Tennyson's speaker bears witness from a physical and emotional distance designed to obscure the reality of the battles and sacrifices in order to present to the English nation the esthetic beauty of these heroic acts.

In contrast, Owen "particularizes the suffering of these soldiers trapped in war. He explodes Tennyson's conventional war imagery" (Breen 181). Within the context of the tradition of the grotesque, Owen realizes Tennyson's metaphors ("the jaws of death" and "the mouth of Hell"), while emphasizing their various physical and conceptual dimensions. Thus the concepts of anatomy and the act of eating are blended together with the soldiers' experiences of suffering in the trenches and the plethora of physical detail restores the literal, grotesque aspect to the commonplace phrases ("death's jaws," "mouths of Hell," "teeth of traps"). Owen restores thereby to the reader's awareness the unacceptability of such a comparison between a human being and a devoured animal, while emphasizing their joint transformation into a physical entity reduced to pieces. Such detail (throat of phlegm, teeth of traps, smell of bones) shapes the speaker into a reliable witness who is exposed to the experiences of battle, ultimately endorsing his challenge to Tennyson. This metonymic detail also calls into question the tradition of poetry of praise and heroism, as well as its importance both in the documentation of war and in the literary response to this experience. Owen's poems thus demonstrate "that the unprecedentedly bleak materiality of death in the Great War necessarily revises literary as well as literal relationships to dying, death, and the dead" (Gilbert 181).

Echoes of these complex relationships can be found in *Krieg oyf der Erd* particularly in the transition between the prose section and the first poetic sequence entitled "The Cavalryman's Song." This transition appears, on the one hand, to be sudden thereby creating an apparent tension on two levels: between the realistic world of the prose section in which the pastoral landscape is destroyed before the soldier's eyes, a world in which archaic cavalry battles are enacted in that very same pastoral landscape, and between the modern "alienated wanderer" who records images of fragmentation and loss through the use of fragmented syntax and chapters and the speaker who observes the fighting from a distance and carefully maintains a heroic pose. What is more, Greenberg's speaker adds a personal touch addressing a young Bosnian woman: "Do not believe, girl, in the sword or the imagination / For the cavalryman is wild and his heart is stone" (57). Greenberg thereby narrows down the target audience for the entire sequence while conferring on the cavalryman — not the role of a national hero — but that of a romantic, wounded, and seductive one. Various "conversations"—in other words, intra-textual and inter-textual relationships — transpire subsequently: between the cavalryman and the young woman, between the cavalryman and the "alienated wanderer," and between the literary tradition of glorification of heroes (to which Tennyson's poetry belongs) and the literary tradition created during the experience of combat in World War I (as in the works of Owen and Sassoon).

These relationships in their various dimensions are revealed in Greenberg's description of the cavalry attack: "Swords drawn, galloping horses / Shining like the stars never [shone]" (51) and "Imagine a night of cheering in the darkness / And wild galloping through the fields with swords / Drawn in the air!" (58). Highlighted is the esthetic beauty of the attack as befits a hero describing the battle to a young woman. The metonymic description, replete with details and actions, blurs the violence and suffering that are so integral to battle. It can be argued, however, that Greenberg is struggling here with the heroic tradition. Tennyson summarizes the battle with the lines "Storm'd at with shot and shell / While horse and hero fell" (1035), emphasizing thereby the use of musical language and vague metaphor comparing the attack to a storm, a common image of noise and violence. On his part, how-

ever, Greenberg compels the soldier to bear witness to the price of battle, adding realistic details in another poem of the sequence: "Cheers at midnight! Imagine: Your ears / Hear the cries of the cavalrymen with their bayonets / Lost in the dark— // And imagine the field of corpses in the frost of death: / Bodies and horses on rucksacks and swords / In the glistening dawn" (58). The cavalrymen's cries in the first stanza once again present the auditory overload found in the poetry of Owen. Further, in the scene depicted in the second stanza, the cavalryman entreats the young woman (and the reader) to share his burden of witnessing the cruel reality of battle. This detailed witness to battle continues in the second poetic sequence: "And on the peaks and their glaciers / Fire and storms battled with people — / Where a side trail meets a cave between cliffs / Lays the decaying body of someone eaten by vultures —" (64).

There is a description of the pastoral landscape that had been destroyed: as in the work of Tennyson, warfare is portrayed in terms of forces of nature. Yet alongside this muted description, a piercing account of the battle's aftermath is presented. This is accomplished through the grotesque image of a body "eaten by vultures" (itself evocative of the revolting ugliness of Sassoon's phrase "the eyeless dead"), in which recognition of the decomposed physical entity obliterates any aura of mythical heroism. This complex reading emphasizes the differences and parallels between the largely realistic prose and the poems of heroism and sadness. For reading the poetry section as part of a "textual system" (Kristeva 15) allows it to be seen not simply as a hiatus between the two prose sections, but also as an attempt to cope with the different personal and esthetic responses to World War I. The "alienated wanderer" reappears in the final prose section in which he leaves behind the experiences of battle to portray his journeys among the Serbs and Bosnians. Greenberg describes the destruction suffered by the civilian population.

And at later times, during later nights, it was quite frightening: Here and there, in a stone hut, something would flare and then go out; shots were heard, people wrestling in their hideouts. Illusory alarmed dark eyes staring and lurking ... and in the morning, the passing clouds carried a redness within them as a body with a revolver in its hand and a hole in its temple lay outside the door... Sometimes it was the body of a young woman, with wild black hair and a torn chest. That was even crueler. But inside the house lay pieces of discarded furniture alongside human limbs, mostly heads, with beaten eyes, household items and weaponry, sacks and long loaves of bread in a cold puddle of blood. Ovens still blazed fire, and every small flame that sparked was like a hidden eye witnessing Serbia's pain. (65-66)

The metonymic images of violence and destruction in Greenberg's descriptions of battle set out the remnants of civilian life: a body that has been shot, fragments of furniture, human limbs, a puddle of blood. These images obliterate any vision of pastorality, as well as the innocent (and potential) sexuality of the young Bosnian woman from the previous poetic sequence. Here, the woman's "wild black hair" and "torn chest" are evidences of sexual attack, investing the scene with distorted eroticism. The emphasis on vision encompasses within it the metonymic and symbolic development of the actual act of sight. On the one hand, the physical fragments of houses and bodies are cataloged randomly thereby envisioning the brutality of the attack itself. This witnessing of the scene is paralleled in the threatening act of sight performed by the "illusory alarmed dark eyes," whose "staring and lurking" menace, as well as envisage, the attack. On the other hand, the final, symbolic image, which compares the observing eye to a "small flame," alludes to the Jewish memorial service (in which a candle is lit in commemoration of the dead), thereby transforming the speaker's testimony into an act of mourning that connects two traditions and nations.

The speaker's passive witnessing leads ultimately to his silencing. For in the closing chapter of this volume, Greenberg presents a similar description: "From a side path amidst the ruins a woman emerges in a long garment and with a bloated belly. In her two arms she holds an infant and clasps its [small] face to her bosom. A pale, anguished boy is dragged behind her: a bit hunchbacked, wearing a small, faded cap down to his ears. One hand pulled on the edges of his mother's clothes and the other waved a twig. Vioh! Vioh! / I took courage and asked: / — Little boy, where are you dragging your mother to? / The little boy stared at me with two burning, crafty eyes. / His small and sharp nose was scabbed. / The twig froze in the air. / The mother responded in anger: / Hm ... Do you care, indeed!" (81). It is significant that Greenberg chooses to seal his text with a vision of a pregnant woman, added during his editing of the previous volume entitled *אין צייטנס רויש* (In the Rush of Time). The speaker focuses his gaze on the physical aspect of her pregnancy, representing fertility and motherhood—and

as such appears to indicate the war's end, the return home, and the renewal of life. Yet in juxtaposition to the previous scene, there are hints of sexual violence heightened by the use of the grotesque term "bloated" to describe the woman's body. The final silencing of the speaker represents (and even symbolizes) his passivity following the violent battles and confronted with the poverty and suffering embodied by the mother and her children. Although he attempts to bear witness to the war and its aftermath, he remains ultimately alone and voiceless at the volume's end, while the mother literally and symbolically distances herself from him.

In conclusion, *Krieg oyf der Erd* comprises Greenberg's attempt, throughout its period of writing and editing between 1915 and 1923, to connect the images of war with various literary traditions. Hence the transition between prose and poetry, between metonymy and metaphor, between the grotesque and the pastoral, and between the focused gaze on the male body (hanging from the barbed-wire fence) and the focused gaze on the female body (as alternatively an object of sexual abuse and fertility). These transitions reflect the experience of that "alienated wanderer," that "speaker-soldier," who Greenberg created out of his experiences in World War I. The study of shared esthetic strategies and literary traditions therefore underlines the way in which this wanderer witnesses — and stands helpless in the face of — the violence and destruction of battle, as well as that inflicted upon the civilian population.

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